

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

RETOOLING THE NATION-BUILDING STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

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Following the removal of the Taliban regime in 2001, the United States embarked on a concerted nation-building effort in Afghanistan to ensure it never reverts to a terrorist sanctuary. An American-led coalition is facing significant challenges as it strives to achieve this objective, yet the recent downturn in congressional and popular support for the war in Iraq and President Bush's energetic campaign to justify his strategy there obscure the situation in the former Taliban/terrorist stronghold. While the administration frequently offers sanguine assessments of the post-conflict operations in Afghanistan, the final outcome is far from certain. This project examines three of the most prominent ways currently employed to reconstitute the "failed state" of Afghanistan: security sector reform (SSR), extension of government influence via provincial reconstruction teams, and general economic assistance. The research reveals a definite disconnect in the strategy, particularly regarding the resources (or means) that are being applied to accomplish the designated goals. Recommendations are provided to adjust the current strategy in order to increase the likelihood of an enduring result conducive to U.S. national interests.

RETOOLING THE NATIONAL-BUILDING STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

The United States officially began the Global War on Terrorism on 7 October 2001 by attacking Taliban and Al Qaeda targets throughout Afghanistan. Special operations forces embedded with indigenous Northern Alliance fighters, followed by a small conventional force of coalition units, soundly defeated the enemy in two months and forced his retreat along the Afghan-Pakistan border. Once major combat operations ended, however, the Bush Administration, as well as the military leaders on the ground, faced a crucial question: What next? While intricate preparation had ensured the destruction of the enemy, the short timeline between 9/11 and 10/7 precluded adequate post-conflict (often referred to as stability and support operations¹) planning. It quickly became apparent to American leaders, however, that a major effort to rebuild Afghanistan would be necessary to ensure it never again lapsed into a terrorist breeding ground or sanctuary. Even President Bush, who campaigned against military involvement in “peripheral” operations and reiterated his opposition to nation-building² just prior to launching Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), changed his opinion soon after the major fighting was over.³ Thus, the United States embarked on a concerted nation-building effort, employing American elements of power and encouraging the international community to share the burden in this monumental endeavor.

Despite the serious challenges facing the United States and its allies in Afghanistan, however, the recent downturn in congressional and popular support for the war in Iraq and President Bush’s energetic campaign to justify his strategy there obscure the situation in the former Taliban/terrorist stronghold. The relatively small number of American troops deployed, the modest casualty figures, and the general consensus throughout the world regarding the legitimacy of the mission, contribute to Afghanistan’s status as a “secondary” undertaking. While the administration frequently offers sanguine assessments of the nation-building effort⁴ and even political/military commentators such as General (Ret.) Barry McCaffrey see reasons for optimism,⁵ the final outcome in Afghanistan is far from certain. Despite significant, perhaps even remarkable victories in the political sphere – most recently the convening of the first parliament in decades – there are numerous impediments to the creation of an enduring, democratic Afghanistan, including the absence of a credible police force, the limited reach of the central government, and the prolific production of opium. Notwithstanding a resolute emphasis on post-conflict operations, the current US strategy in Afghanistan fails to adequately address many of the obstacles to an enduring peace in Afghanistan. This paper will delineate American policy shortcomings and explore possible avenues for improvement.

The importance of nation-building is codified in various high-level documents that promulgate American policy. The President's National Security Strategy (NSS) specifically mentions Afghanistan: "As we pursue the terrorists in Afghanistan, we will continue to work with international organizations . . . as well as non-governmental organizations, and other countries to provide the humanitarian, political, economic, and security assistance necessary to rebuild Afghanistan so that it will never again . . . provide a haven for terrorists."⁶ Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's National Defense Strategy calls for the capability to swiftly defeat adversaries in two separate theaters and to turn one of these operations into a more decisive and enduring result. To achieve this more ambitious end-state, "we must plan for . . . extended stability operations involving substantial combat and requiring the rapid and sustained application of national and international capabilities spanning the elements of state power."⁷ Likewise, one of the National Military Strategy goals directs us to "Prevail Against Adversaries." Stability Operations are specified as one of the ways to accomplish this end:

Winning decisively will require synchronizing and integrating major combat operations, stability operations and significant post-conflict interagency operations to establish conditions of stability and security . . . The Joint Force must be able to transition from major combat operations to stability operations and to conduct those operations simultaneously.⁸

The lack of planning and erratic execution of post-conflict operations in recent American endeavors (particularly in Iraq) undoubtedly prompted the very recent publication of National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-44 and Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 3000.05 mandating unprecedented government attention on this significant issue. NSPD-44 places the Secretary of State in charge of leading and coordinating the nation's efforts to plan and execute reconstruction and stabilization assistance to other countries. In particular, the State Department will "identify states at risk of instability . . . and develop detailed contingency plans for integrated . . . reconstruction and stabilization efforts . . . which are integrated with military contingency plans, where appropriate."⁹ The directive also mandates that all other executive departments and agencies identify skilled personnel who can be deployed for post-conflict missions and establishes a Policy Coordination Committee for Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations.¹⁰ DoD Directive 3000.05 places significant emphasis on stability operations, stating that they are "a core U.S. military mission" and should "be given priority comparable to combat operations."¹¹

These documents either directly or indirectly underscore the critical importance of Afghanistan's future to America's ultimate security. The translation of emerging doctrine to actual strategy, however, has been ad hoc and inconsistent.

The Current Strategy: Ends, Ways, Means and Risks

The strategic objective (or end) for Afghanistan is to rebuild the country so it will never again become a terrorist sanctuary. This goal is complicated by the latent Taliban/Al Qaeda-led insurgency there that threatens all participants in the reconstruction effort. Given these problematic circumstances, the U.S. government is pursuing several ways, in cooperation with the international community, to solidify Afghanistan's future as a stable, peaceful, and self-sufficient nation.¹² Most of the ways predictably employ the military element of national power; however, American leaders are also utilizing diplomatic tools to build consensus and economic measures to jump-start a totally broken economy. This Strategy Research Project focuses on three of the most prominent ways currently employed to reconstitute the "failed state" of Afghanistan: security sector reform (SSR), extension of government influence via provincial reconstruction teams, and economic assistance. The following analysis reveals a definite disconnect in the strategy, particularly regarding the resources (or means) that are being applied to accomplish the designated ways.

Security sector reform refers to a concerted effort by the international community to share the burden of rebuilding Afghanistan's basic security institutions. At a conference in Geneva in 2002, various nations agreed to assume the role of "lead donor" in the most critical tasks at hand. The United States is responsible for creating an Afghan National Army (ANA); Germany is working to build a national police force; Italy is charged with judicial reform; Great Britain is leading the effort to combat opium cultivation; and Japan is responsible for the disarmament, demilitarization, and reintegration (DDR) of the numerous militias still operating throughout the country.¹³ All of these efforts have experienced their share of setbacks. Even the American program, which is by far the most successful of the five tasks (training the ANA is on pace to finish ahead of schedule), suffers from major ends-ways mismatches. For example, the organization charged with the ANA mission, the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan (OSC-A), is not staffed with sufficient qualified officers to effectively guide the reform process. OSC-A officials recently reported that they had never been assigned more than 71 percent of approved strength; the high turnover rate of U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine personnel (as often as every four months) seriously impedes continuity of effort.¹⁴ Furthermore, while the actual training of new soldiers and officers has proceeded smoothly, OSC-A has not been able to fully equip the units with required uniforms, radios, weapons, ammunition, and vehicles. The acceleration of the number of battalions completing basic training has led to shortages of coalition trainers embedded with these units (the number of trainers in each battalion was

temporarily reduced from 16 to 12).¹⁵ These trainers perform a crucial function of mentoring new Afghan soldiers and officers and extending training beyond the formal basic course.

Germany's effort to reform the police has been plagued by poor planning and lack of commitment. Although the Germans developed a strategy paper to address the situation, they failed to distribute and coordinate it with other donors, particularly the U.S., which is the largest financial contributor. They also moved too slowly, considering the importance of the mission, prompting the United States to begin its own training program of patrolmen while Germany concentrates on the officer corps.¹⁶ Until a credible, competent, and honest police force is operational throughout the country, it will be impossible for the central government to extend its influence and enforce its policies.

Italy has fallen short in its admittedly daunting task of reforming the Afghan judicial system, which is currently "characterized by a conflicting mix of civil, religious, and customary laws, with few trained judges, prosecutors, or other justice personnel."¹⁷ The reform program seriously lags behind the other sectors due to Italy's failure to allocate adequate personnel and financial resources (it has provided only \$10 million annually¹⁸). In addition, the international community's inability to address the problem in a holistic fashion, and the Afghan Ministry of Interior's (Moi) failure to integrate its own internal and police reforms with judicial restructuring impedes what is arguably the most important of the five sectors.¹⁹

Although Great Britain is aggressively tackling the opium issue in close coordination with the Afghan Moi, the United States and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan's drug trade continues to be a major destabilizing force in the country. It remains one of the most profitable sources of income for the common farmer, accounting for more than half of the entire economy. Eradication policies that do not provide alternative livelihood options run the risk of alienating a large percentage of the population.²⁰ This problem is compounded by the active involvement of many senior government officials, including cabinet officials and provincial governors, in the drug trade. President Karzai has vigorously denounced Afghanistan's opium cultivation (he declared a "holy war" against drugs last year), but thus far almost no progress has been made to substantially reduce it. Until a viable program takes effect, the warlords who process and smuggle drugs will retain a source of wealth that will seriously hinder government attempts to marginalize them.

The DDR program led by Japan, in close cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), has enjoyed considerable success, accounting for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of over

60,000 former Afghan Military Forces (AMF)²¹ and over 11,000 heavy weapons. Numerous militias (some estimates report as many as 850 groups totaling over 65,000 members), however, are not part of the DDR program. These groups are controlled and supplied by local warlords, drug bosses, and, in some cases, government officials.²² Until the Karzai administration takes a firm stand regarding the elimination of these “undocumented” militias, they will continue to be a latent source of instability and rebellion. Complicating this issue is the continued reliance of coalition commanders on warlords and their fighters to prosecute the ongoing counterinsurgency.

Another overarching challenge associated with SSR is the interdependent nature of the five tasks, which combine to form a complex “system of systems.” Because all of the tasks are connected in some manner, progress is severely constrained when they do not proceed at an compatible pace. For example, a credible police force is essential for opium eradication, but it is useless without a functioning judicial system or ineffective if co-opted by warlords.²³ This reality makes coordinated, concerted effort on behalf of all five lead nations absolutely essential. Furthermore, economic reconstruction is inherently interlinked with the success of SSR. Barnett Rubin, one of the architects of the Bonn Agreement, notes that if people cannot make an honest living they will naturally gravitate towards criminal activity (the heroin industry is a prime example). Lawbreakers will seek protection from the historic power brokers – the warlords – thereby diminishing the rule of law. This anarchic environment fosters an economy based on illegal transactions, significantly reducing the tax base that is essential for long-term sustainment of an army and police force.²⁴ The bottom line is that insufficient means (planning, people, and money) have been provided for security sector reform. Although the strategy is prudent, inadequate resources, as well as insufficient coordination among the lead donors, seriously jeopardize its success.

Extension of central government authority to the outlying provinces is another linchpin in America’s strategy to re-build Afghanistan. Given the nation’s scarcity of roads, railways, and airline transportation, its primitive communications network, and the tenuous security situation, this task is incredibly demanding. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is the coalition’s primary means for addressing this critical goal. PRTs are “joint civilian-military organizations whose mission is to promote governance, security, and reconstruction throughout the country.”²⁵ Comprised of a robust military contingent and interagency representatives from the sponsoring country, as well as an Afghan government official, these teams are designed to “export” the stable environment currently provided by the United Nations mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul.²⁶

While these teams have been generally praised for their ability to extend central governmental influence outside of the capital, numerous problems have limited their effectiveness. First, the goals of the PRTs are not clearly defined and vary depending on their sponsoring countries. For example, Americans focus on quick-impact reconstruction projects and internal force protection; British teams concentrate on security sector reform and are willing to intervene in warlord confrontations; German teams are much larger (up to 300 personnel) with a large civilian contingent.²⁷ A British study notes that the lack of common operating protocols and objectives weakens unity of effort and “leads to confusion among national and international actors who cannot predict from one PRT to the next what to expect in terms of expertise, level or sustainability of engagement, or focus.”²⁸ For example, the unwillingness of American PRTs to provide security for NGOs has arguably limited the ability of more qualified agencies to provide reconstruction assistance.²⁹ Maintaining a clear distinction between NGOs and PRTs has been another source of friction. James K. Bishop, director of InterAction, notes that soldiers carrying weapons and wearing civilian clothes while engaged in humanitarian missions have “blurred the necessary distinction between members of the military and humanitarian workers, potentially putting the latter at risk” because their impartiality was compromised.³⁰ Although a PRT Steering Committee headed by the Afghan Ministry of the Interior is in place, it has yet to successfully synchronize and standardize PRT operations throughout the country.³¹

Another major deficiency of PRTs is the lack of resources dedicated to them, particularly subject matter experts. Consider the American model: the full team includes a commanding officer (usually a lieutenant colonel) and his staff; representatives from the State Department, the Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Agriculture; two Army civil affairs teams; a military police (MP) team; a psychological operations unit; an explosive ordnance/de-mining unit; an intelligence team; medics; a force protection unit (usually a 40-soldier infantry platoon); administrative and support personnel; a representative from the Afghan Ministry of the Interior (usually a colonel from the Afghan National Police); and several interpreters. Such robust requirements are rarely met, however. One of the civil affairs teams and the military police are routinely missing, as is the Department of Agriculture representative.³² Further, most of the USAID representatives are contractors rather than professional USAID officers.³³

Despite all of these problems in executing the PRT program, the overwhelming consensus is that they have had an overall positive impact on stability and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, a reality that highlights a final deficiency: there are not enough PRTs to engage

the major population centers, let alone the more rural areas, in any meaningful way. Michael J. McNerney notes that “establishing 22 PRTs in the three and a half years after the collapse of the Taliban government is a snail’s pace when dealing with an insurgency.”³⁴ Future plans call for the establishment of only four more PRTs by the end of 2007!³⁵ This would leave at least eight of the country’s 34 provinces without a PRT. Without significantly more PRTs that can establish routine relationships with large populations in the hinterland, the continued influence of the local militia leaders, the ineffectiveness of the police, and widespread illicit poppy production will continue.

Economic assistance is the third major focus of U.S. strategy. Afghanistan was already one of the poorest nations in the world before it suffered through 23 years of conflict. The cost of creating government institutions and a functioning infrastructure – roads, hospitals, schools, telecommunications networks, power grids, etc. – is staggering, so several donor conferences have been held to solicit funds. The Afghan government projects the reconstruction bill to be as high as \$27.5 billion for 2002-2010.³⁶ The U.S. is the largest contributor to this effort, providing over one-third of the \$3.6 billion pledged by the international community for 2004.³⁷ Unfortunately, many countries have failed to follow through on their pledges, causing a significant shortage of funds for designated projects.³⁸ Despite the best of intentions, many of the designated projects have not met the stated goals. For example, only 85 schools of the planned 286 were built or refurbished in 2004.³⁹

The manner in which available funds are spent exacerbates the problem. The World Bank recently published a report criticizing the fact that only one-fourth of foreign aid flows through the Afghan government,⁴⁰ resulting in a lack of coordination and control. The absence of government stewardship of reconstruction funds has degraded its legitimacy among the population and aroused hostile feelings toward foreign contractors and nongovernmental organizations. James Phillips at the Heritage Foundation notes that “many Afghans are increasingly disenchanted with foreign contractors . . . who are paid exorbitant salaries by Afghan standards.”⁴¹ Although the Afghan people in general are grateful for the assistance they are receiving, continued failure to employ them in reconstruction projects could jeopardize the goodwill and cooperation foreigners have enjoyed over the past five years.

The United States is, of course, seeking other sources of funding for Afghan reconstruction. For example, the Department of Treasury unblocked \$145 million in Afghan assets that were frozen in 1999; likewise, nearly all of the sanctions imposed during Taliban rule have been lifted.⁴² The Bush Administration is also working on a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) designed to “create a bilateral forum to deepen trade and

investment relations” with Afghanistan and is supporting Afghanistan’s membership in the World Trade Organization.⁴³ While many of these programs will provide more money for nation-building in Afghanistan, the efficiency with which the funds are spent is the ultimate determinant of success. Thus far, the record is disappointing.

Even this cursory review of some of the key aspects of U.S. strategy reveals a serious imbalance in the ends-ways-means paradigm. Assuming that the proposed end state is in the vital interest of the United States, the main problem lies in the means-ways disconnect. Failure to allocate adequate resources to pursue the desired ways produces a high level of risk in several spheres. Lack of a comprehensive security structure threatens the legitimacy of local government officials and makes it difficult to complete reconstruction projects or to initiate new business enterprises. Inept police forces are unable to provide basic law and order. Large, independently operating militia units undermine the authority and reach of the central government. Afghanistan’s continued reliance on illicit opium production damages its international reputation and hinders development of a viable economy. Any one of these issues alone can seriously hinder Afghanistan’s progress; combined, they present a formidable obstacle that threatens the basic survival of the country. Ultimately, average Americans and citizens of other coalition countries may grow weary of the commitment and force their governments to abandon the cause. The risk of failure looms heavily over the entire mission.

Alternate Strategies

Most critics of the current strategy contend that it is woefully under-resourced, or that the ways employed do not adequately address the fundamental requirements of nation-building. A few pundits even argue that the end state itself is flawed. James Dobbins’ RAND study of past post-conflict efforts shows a direct correlation between resources – numbers of soldiers deployed, money spent – and the capacity to provide security, build democratic institutions, and foster economic development.⁴⁴ Citing Kosovo as a success story, he notes that the “United States and its allies have put 25 times more money and 50 times more troops per capita into postconflict Kosovo than into postconflict Afghanistan.”⁴⁵ Substantial increases in money and manpower would undoubtedly contribute to the success of SSR and facilitate the formation of many more PRTs, yet there are at least three risks associated with this approach. First, a larger military presence, especially of American troops, might incite the largely Islamic population and feed claims that “imperial” America is occupying Afghanistan. Second, if the U.S. provides the bulk of the additional troops, this commitment of forces will weaken the nation’s already stressed capacity to respond to other contingencies around the world, as well as exacerbate the

relentless optempo experienced by our armed forces. Finally, increased spending will reduce both U.S. and allied capacity to pursue domestic agendas, which could erode public support for continued involvement in the rebuilding effort.

Other critics agree with the end state of Afghan nation-building but advocate changes to the ways this strategy is pursued. Kathy Gannon argues that U.S. and NATO cooperation with the militias and the warlords who lead them presents the most ominous obstacle to Afghanistan's transition.⁴⁶ This opinion parallels that of President Karzai himself, who in 2004 "cited regional and factional militias as the key threat to Afghan stability – greater than that posed by continuing Taliban attacks."⁴⁷ Gannon recommends that we cut all ties to the warlords as quickly as possible. While the elimination of warlords' influence certainly would contribute to national unification and perhaps weaken the opium trade, we must acknowledge the difficulty of such an undertaking. These warlords, as mentioned earlier, are the same individuals who fought side-by-side with OEF forces to defeat the Taliban and who continue to support coalition forces in their counterinsurgency/counter-terrorist campaign. Gannon contends, however, that continued reliance on the militias and our on-going provision of weapons and money to them have increased the warlords' prestige and influence and eroded Karzai's authority.⁴⁸ Yet her proposal, unfortunately, involves a significant level of risk as well. If the warlords become disenfranchised, they could easily muster sufficient forces to seriously challenge the government in Kabul and return the country to chaos. ISAF is not large enough, nor is it sufficiently equipped to counter such retaliation. So the U.S. could quickly find itself in a quagmire comparable with the Soviet experience, compounded by a probable resurgence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda.⁴⁹ Although it is disturbing for many Afghans and outside observers to see former Taliban leaders and current warlords (some accused of war crimes) assume seats in the recently elected parliament, integration of these individuals into the political process is the only realistic way to bolster their collaboration in building a democratic, institution-based state.

Another group of experts advocates more sweeping modifications to current strategy, claiming that the end state itself is flawed. Subodh Atal argues that the United States should eschew the goal of nation-building in Afghanistan for four reasons: First, external aid has proven to be only marginally effective in reconstituting failed states. Second, entanglement in Afghan internal affairs diverts American attention from the primary mission – defeating the Taliban and their terrorist guests.⁵⁰ Third, coalition and Afghan forces have been unable to provide the indispensable prerequisite for reconstruction activities: security.⁵¹ Fourth, the Afghan people may begin to resent the presence of foreign soldiers on their soil.⁵² He thus recommends that the U.S. dedicate all efforts towards defeating the insurgency along the

Afghan-Pakistan border and then exit immediately; this strategy will prevent America from becoming entangled in the “Great Game” that has plagued other world powers (Britain and Russia) for centuries.⁵³ While this proposal would no doubt limit the duration of American involvement in Afghanistan, the short-term savings would pale in comparison to the risks generated. In particular, without major financial intervention and institution-building assistance from the international community, it is very doubtful that Afghanistan could overcome the numerous obstacles threatening its future, such as lawlessness, poverty, and the lack of governance and infrastructure. The likelihood that it would revert to an anarchic state and a bastion for terrorists would be extremely high.

Recommendations for Retooling the Current Strategy

There is no lack of proposed “fixes” to improve the current policy, some of which have been described above. Most of them seem constructive, yet many involve excessive risk. Proceeding on the assumption that a reformed Afghanistan is a vital national interest (based on the current National Security Strategy), the following recommendations would retool the current approach rather than discard it wholesale. In addition to dedicating adequate funding for the reconstruction effort, the Bush Administration should immediately implement the following courses of action:

(1) Continue the current security sector reform program, but apply diplomatic pressure (and perhaps economic incentives) to persuade the lead donor countries to redouble their commitment and efforts in terms of personnel assigned and money spent. In order to align the progress of the five tasks, the U.S. should volunteer to assume the mantle as “SSR coordinator” and devise a system of accountability and regular synchronization meetings to provide a forum for cooperation. Rather than lamenting the problems caused by the interdependence of the tasks, we should capitalize on this interdependence and use it as a catalyst to drive collaboration.

To relieve some of the burden on the lead countries, aggressively lobby for the United Nations to assume a more prominent role in SSR, particularly in training police and providing local security during SSR activities. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has the mandate to promote national reconciliation, fulfill the tasks outlined in the Bonn Agreement, and manage all UN humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts in country.⁵⁴ While it has done an admirable job, particularly with organizing and monitoring the national elections, its expertise has not been fully exploited. The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) notes that “while other UN missions have included substantial numbers of military

observers and/or civilian police (CIVPOL) – for training or monitoring missions, and even sometimes with direct executive (law enforcement and powers of arrest) authority – UNAMA's police and military advisers have never numbered above single digits.⁵⁵ There are few risks to this approach, as it is merely an attempt to improve a sound concept (i.e. SSR). It maintains the advantage of international burden-sharing, while reducing the American requirement for personnel and funding.

(2) Radically increase the number of PRTs operating in the country and expand their mandate to include a more active security function. The forces for this expansion should come from ISAF and the new Afghan National Army.⁵⁶ NATO has declared that Afghanistan is its highest priority, stressing that Afghanistan is the alliance's "first mission outside the Euro-Atlantic area."⁵⁷ Yet NATO members are currently contributing only .25 percent of their available forces to ISAF.⁵⁸ Although NATO has conducted initial planning to expand its operations into the more dangerous eastern and southern portions of the country, there are no current plans for significantly increasing the number of PRTs.

Including the ANA in PRTs will not only alleviate the demand for foreign forces, it will also add to the legitimacy of the PRT mission⁵⁹ and refine the training of ANA soldiers as they are mentored by their ISAF counterparts. Increased numbers of PRTs will significantly strengthen the government's authority beyond Kabul and enable judiciary reform, DDR, and opium eradication. While there is risk that a larger foreign "footprint" will incite nationalistic backlash and provide more targets for insurgents, the RAND study cited above suggests that more soldiers will enhance the probability of eventual success. As the PRTs facilitate improvements of basic living conditions, indigenous support will increase, which will generate beneficial second- and third-order effects like improved intelligence regarding criminal or insurgent activity.⁶⁰ Comprehensive PRT coverage throughout the country will achieve the two most important prerequisites for effective nation-building – security and central governance. Diplomatic savvy will be crucial in this endeavor as we solicit greater contributions from allies who are challenged by domestic political and economic arguments against increased participation. Encouraging their greater contributions should be a top priority for U.S. military and civilian officials.

Given that many of the PRTs will continue to be sponsored by the United States (working under the NATO-led ISAF instead of OEF), it is also imperative that the military and civilian elements of American PRTs improve their cooperation and coordination in executing the mission. Establishment of the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) at the State Department was an excellent first step in relieving the military of complete responsibility for

post-conflict operations. The White House and DoD directives mentioned earlier provide even more direct, concrete imperatives to increase our nation-building capacity. As the U.S. bureaucracy plods through the implementation of these policies, U.S. officials should immediately consider the model provided by Britain's PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, "whose civilian and military members were trained, deployed, and supported as a team,"⁶¹ as well as our own experience in Vietnam, where the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) program was led and staffed primarily by State Department and USAID personnel.⁶²

(3) Develop mechanisms to channel a much greater percentage of foreign aid funds through the Afghan government. For projects controlled by outsiders, exercise concrete measures to overcome bureaucratic obstacles and focus on the maximum employment of indigenous workers. Larry Goodson notes the opportunity this initiative provides to merge security and economic objectives: contracting warlords and their militias to execute construction projects "would give both leaders and their foot soldiers a stake in the rebuilding."⁶³ James Phillips also advocates this approach, arguing that dependence upon foreign contractors should be reduced as quickly as possible. He contends that the U.S. should place greater effort toward "building the Afghan government's capacity to help its own people by improving public administration and training government officials and Afghan NGOs to train other Afghans."⁶⁴ While U.S. officials will most certainly have to encourage the international community to contribute significant amounts to this effort, the more difficult task will be applying those assets in the most effective way possible. In particular, projects that provide immediate improvement in the lives of war-weary, impoverished people are most likely to produce long-lasting results.

(4) Develop and execute a public diplomacy campaign to capitalize on the "information" element of national power. Ray Millen addresses this often neglected aspect of strategy implementation. He proposes construction of a network of studios and transmission towers that would target the entire country. He then recommends implementing a public awareness campaign designed to educate the population regarding government programs and to foster "buy-in" to the reform process.⁶⁵ This initiative will be particularly important in the government's effort to combat narcotics trafficking. Not only will Karzai's exhortations against opium production reach a wider audience, but information regarding alternate employment programs will be much easier to disseminate. Given the low literacy rate of the country, the information architecture should focus initially on oral and visual media to transmit desired messages.⁶⁶ There is little risk to this proposal; however, attempts by opposing factions to paint the campaign as western propaganda should be anticipated.

(5) Develop a comprehensive plan that coordinates the plethora of activities conducted by OEF, ISAF, UNAMA, NGOs, and the Afghan government. Larry Goodson notes that currently no single party is really in charge of the overarching reconstruction effort: “ostensibly, the United Nations is, but that is as good as saying that no one is.”⁶⁷ The U.S. Embassy in Kabul is valiantly striving to guide the rebuilding process, but its limited resources and span of control of the numerous contributing countries impede its effectiveness. Although there is an Afghanistan Security and Reconstruction Steering Group co-chaired by the United States, the European Union, Japan, and Saudi Arabia, it has thus far been unsuccessful in establishing a comprehensive blueprint to establish goals and track results. The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit recommends mechanisms to align priorities and reduce overlap among the numerous lower-level coordinating bodies. In particular, the plan should address the following:

- Specific roles and responsibilities of the various security organizations;
- Measures to fill security vacuums created by implementation of the DDR program;
- Fielding a professional police force; and
- The need to synchronize information operations among the Government, OEF, ISAF and UNAMA.⁶⁸

While planning in and of itself is not normally considered to be a component of strategy, in the case of Afghanistan events have moved so quickly that the strategy has become disjointed and at times incoherent. Fundamental strategic adaptations – including new planning – are necessary. Leaders of this process must dedicate the time to develop an overarching concept that aligns their efforts to realize the vision of a transformed Afghanistan. The National Security Council (NSC) is probably the only organization capable of orchestrating the development of such a comprehensive design, one that addresses all aspects of assistance: military, nongovernmental, and economic. Therefore, President Bush should immediately task the NSC to work with key allies to accomplish this critical task. Once a plan is in place, a fully-manned U.S. Embassy should be capable of successfully guiding it to a successful outcome.

Conclusion

The reconstruction of Afghanistan is a monumental endeavor, complicated by the nearly total destruction of its infrastructure and an ongoing insurgency. According to the National Security Strategy of the United States and the pronouncements of senior political, military and diplomatic leaders, rebuilding Afghanistan into a stable, representative country that enforces the rule of law and respects human rights is a U.S. foreign policy priority. While it is difficult to find an all-encompassing document outlining a single, integrated strategy (similar to the recently

published “National Security Strategy for Victory in Iraq”), principal elements of the strategy are described in various government agency (DOD, DOS, USAID, etc.) publications. Close examination of key aspects of the strategy – security sector reform, provincial reconstruction, and economic aid – reveals a major imbalance in the ends-ways-means strategic construct. In particular, we are not applying sufficient resources to the strategy to ensure its success. Furthermore, we are not employing the complete range of our national elements and instruments of power to affect the outcome. The situation in Afghanistan has uncommonly engaged a good portion of the international community in assisting this war-torn nation. Thus the challenge is not to convince others that something must be done; instead the challenge lies in encouraging the “willing” to share a more proportionate share of the burden and in synchronizing the efforts of the key actors.

The Bush Administration should immediately embark on an aggressive diplomatic campaign to persuade its coalition and NATO partners to fulfill their pledges to the SSR process and to widely expand the PRT program. It should also initiate an Afghan public awareness campaign and take the lead in developing a comprehensive plan to guide specific action, set priorities, and track results. These tasks will not be easy, in view of the Administration’s current struggle to justify its Iraq strategy amidst growing domestic and international criticism. Yet the recent discernable spike in terrorist activity in southern Afghanistan, to include suicide bombings, has prompted analysts to suggest that the situation is showing early signs of a large-scale insurgency similar to the one in Iraq. The ramifications of such a dire prospect for America and her allies would be obvious and ominous. The faster the world community works cooperatively to rebuild Afghanistan, including both its infrastructure and institutions, the less likely a reinvigorated insurgency will take hold. Rebuilding a shattered state is an incredibly difficult and complex task. But in the case of Afghanistan it is a task that must not fail. The ultimate challenge for the world’s only superpower is convincing everyone else of the urgency of the cause.

Endnotes

¹ Stability and support operations include peace operations, foreign internal defense, humanitarian and civic assistance, support to counter-drug operations, and combating terrorism. See U.S. Department of the Army, *Stability Operations and Support Operations*, Field Manual 3-07 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 20 February 2003), 1-4.

² The term “nation-building” has various meanings depending upon the context of its use. For the purpose of this paper, nation-building refers to activities aimed at securing long-term stability in a country after war or conflict. These activities include establishment (or

reestablishment) of democratic government and national institutions (police, military, etc.), revitalization of the economy, and physical reconstruction.

³ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 339.

⁴ Kurt Amend, the Director for Afghanistan on the National Security Council, cites the advancement of civil rights for women, the exponential growth in student enrollment, and the completion of the Kabul-Kandahar highway as examples of progress. See Kurt Amend, "Ask the White House," 19 December 2005, linked from *The White House Home Page* at "Interact," available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ask/20051219.html>; Internet; accessed 20 December 2005.

⁵ Barry R. McCaffrey, "Afghans Have Voted for Change, But it Will Come Only if the U.S. Stays the Course," *Armed Forces Journal* (November 2005): 17.

⁶ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 17 September 2002), 7. The President has repeatedly declared in speeches and press briefings that Afghanistan is one of the country's most important foreign policy priorities.

⁷ Donald H. Rumsfeld, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, March 2005), 17.

⁸ Richard B. Myers, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 2004), 13.

⁹ *National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-44*, 7 December 2005; available from <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-44.html>; Internet; accessed 20 December 2005.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Department of Defense Directive NUMBER 3000.05*, 28 November 2005; available from <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives>; Internet; accessed 20 December 2005. The directive defines stability operations as "military and civilian activities conducted across the spectrum from peace to conflict to establish or maintain order in States and regions" and lists several tasks within the stabilization domain, including rebuilding security, judicial, and other governmental institutions; reviving the private sector; and constructing infrastructure. It calls for cross-training of DoD personnel throughout other U.S. agencies and nongovernmental organizations and the establishment of a stability operations center to capture lessons learned and coordinate research and education.

¹² The Bonn Agreement, brokered by the United Nations and signed December 5, 2001, provided the framework for peace, security, and nation-building in Afghanistan. Delegates to the Bonn Conference included Afghan military commanders, expatriates, representatives from the major ethnic groups, and members of the exiled monarchy. The priority effort outlined in the "Bonn Agreement" – establishment of a functional government – was officially completed with the successful presidential election in October 2004 and the recent parliamentary elections in September 2005. District elections are scheduled for 2006. See "Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government

Institutions, December 5, 2001," available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/texts/bonnagreement.html>; Internet; accessed 17 November 2005.

¹³ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Afghanistan Security: Report to the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, June 2005), 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14-17.

¹⁶ Ibid., 19, 26.

¹⁷ Ibid., 29-32

¹⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹ Michael Bhatia, Kevin Lanigan, and Phillip Wilkinson, "Minimal Investments, Minimal Results: The Failure of Security Policy in Afghanistan," 1 June 2004, 18; available from <http://www.arei.org.af>; Internet; accessed 2 December 2005. Perhaps the most compelling obstacle for this task is the widespread corruption that exists throughout all levels of the system and the lack of a formal judicial infrastructure outside of the national and provincial capitals.

²⁰ Ron Moreau and Sami Yousafzai, "A Harvest of Treachery," *MSNBC-Newsweek International Edition Online*, 9 January 2006 [magazine on-line]; available from <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/10683996/site/newsweek/>; Internet; assessed 11 January 2006.

²¹ This term is used to describe members of recognized regional or tribal militias. See *Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme Home Page*, available at <http://www.undpanbp.org/>; Internet; accessed 11 January 2006.

²² Amin Tarzi, "Disarmament in Afghanistan – Which Militias and What Weapons?," 5 April 2005; available from <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/RMOI-6BN3NB?OpenDocument>

²³ *Afghanistan Security*, 29-32.

²⁴ Barnett R. Rubin, "(Re) Building Afghanistan: The Folly of Stateless Democracy," *Current History*, 103 (April 2004): 165 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 8 November 2005.

²⁵ Robert M. Perito, *The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, October 2005), 1.

²⁶ ISAF was proposed during the December 2001 Bonn Conference and established by United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386 on 20 December 2001. Its original mission was to assist the Afghan government in maintaining security in and around Kabul. UNSCR 1510 authorized ISAF to expand its operations beyond Kabul. NATO assumed the lead for ISAF in August 2003. As of 29 November 2005, 36 countries contributed over 9,000 troops to the force. See NATO/ISAF briefing chart, 29 November 2005. ISAF currently leads

and resources nine PRTs in the northern and western portions of the country, while the U.S. controls the other 13. ISAF operates under a separate chain of command from Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) and has a different mission (ISAF's main effort is security; CFC-A's main effort is defeating the Taliban and Al Qaeda remnants).

²⁷ Perito, 3.

²⁸ Dylan Hendrickson, Michael Bhatia, Mark Knight, and Annabel Taylor, *A Review of DFID Involvement in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan*, Report Commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) (London: King's College, 8 July 2005), 7.

²⁹ Perito, 12. The primary mission of the military element of the American PRT is force protection vice security for the indigenous population or NGOs.

³⁰ James K. Bishop, "Combat Role Strains Relations between America's Military and its NGOs," *Humanitarian Review*, Summer 2003 [journal on-line]; available from <http://www.humanitarianreview.org>; Internet; accessed 31 October 2005.

³¹ Perito, 4.

³² Perito, 4-5.

³³ Mr. Hank Nichols, former USAID employee and PRT member, interview by author, 12 December 2005. He claimed that initially the PRTs were severely under-resourced in terms of reconstruction funds and equipment, such as radios and computer software and noted that there were more USAID Foreign Service Officers deployed in Vietnam than USAID currently employs world-wide.

³⁴ Michael J. McNerney, "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?," *Parameters*, 4 (Winter 2005-06): 44.

³⁵ Senate Armed Services Committee, *General John P. Abizaid: The 2005 Posture of the United States Central Command*, 01 March 2005, available from <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2005/March/Abizaid%2003-01-05.pdf>; Internet; accessed 8 January 2006.

³⁶ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 15 June 2005), 43.

³⁷ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Afghanistan Reconstruction: Report to the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, July 2005), 3.

³⁸ *Afghanistan Security*, 28.

³⁹ *Afghanistan Reconstruction*, 4.

⁴⁰ *Afghanistan: Managing Public Finances for Development, Main Report, Volume I*, (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 22 December 2005), vi.

⁴¹ James Phillips, "Assisting Afghanistan After the Elections," 6 October 2005; available from <http://www.heritage.org/research/middleeast/iraq/em985.cfm>; Internet; accessed 31 January 2006.

⁴² Katzman, 43-45.

⁴³ U.S. State Department Fact Sheet, "New Initiatives for a Peaceful, Prosperous, and Democratic Afghanistan," 15 June 2004, available from <http://www.state.gov/p/sa/rls/fs/33575.htm>; Internet; accessed 31 January 2006.

⁴⁴ James Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2003), 146.

⁴⁵ Dobbins et al., 161. Larry Goodson, a professor at the Army War College, has also been critical of the "small footprint" approach, noting that "by 2003, the disorder had gotten so bad that in certain locales people had even begun to miss the Taliban's ability to enforce at least a rough kind of justice and suppress some of the grosser crimes." See Larry Goodson, "Bullets, Ballots, and Poppies in Afghanistan," *Journal of Democracy* 16 (January 2005): 25.

⁴⁶ Kathy Gannon, "Afghanistan Unbound," *Foreign Affairs*, 83 (May/June 2004): 35 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 8 November 2005.

⁴⁷ Katzman, 15.

⁴⁸ Gannon, 35.

⁴⁹ Raymond A. Millen, *Afghanistan: Reconstituting a Collapsed State* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, April 2005), 5.

⁵⁰ Subodh Atal, *At a Crossroads in Afghanistan: Should the United States be Engaged in Nation Building?* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 24 September 2003), 1.

⁵¹ Ibid., 3.

⁵² Ibid., 6.

⁵³ Ibid., 6-7.

⁵⁴ *UNAMA Home Page*, available from <http://www.unama-afg.org>; Internet; accessed 21 November 2005.

⁵⁵ Bhatia, et al., 11.

⁵⁶ Greater involvement in PRTs by the ANA is suggested by Ray Millen. See *Afghanistan*, 14.

⁵⁷ Ron Synovitz, "Afghanistan: NATO Looks to Expand Mission After September Elections," 5 September 2005; available from http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp090505_pr.shtml; Internet; accessed 18 November 2005.

⁵⁸ Bhatia, et al., 21. Although ISAF is currently preparing to assume an expanded role throughout the country (see "ISAF VIII Takes on the Mantle of NATO's Priority Mission," 4 August 2005; available from www.nato.int/nrdc-it/docu/news/2005/050804a.htm; Internet; accessed 21 November 2005), there is significant hesitation from some alliance members, notably The Netherlands (see "NATO Says Might Need More Time for Afghan Expansion," available from <http://abcnews.go.com/International/print?id=1543518>; Internet; accessed 31 January 2006).

⁵⁹ Millen, 14.

⁶⁰ Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, Commanding General, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, recently noted that the Afghans' willingness to provide useful information has steadily increased as coalition presence has expanded into former Taliban-controlled areas. See "DoD News Briefing with Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry," 8 December 2005; available from <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20051208-4441.html>; Internet; accessed 20 December 2005.

⁶¹ McNerney, 45.

⁶² Perito, 14.

⁶³ Goodson, 29.

⁶⁴ Phillips, 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 5-8.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁷ Goodson, 28.

⁶⁸ Bhatia et al., 20.

